THE WESTWARD MIGRATION OF A PLANTER PIONEER IN 1796

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There has been no dearth of letters and journals relating the details of westward migration in the United States. They are the natural consequence of an experience which took men to new lands and away from family and friends. Yet each additional narrative sheds needed light upon some aspect of the westward march. David Meade's letter to his sister describing the journey from the James river to the Kentucky Bluegrass in 1796 is significant for at least two reasons. It reveals the route, equipment, and facilities used in the removal of a plantation establishment in the late eighteenth century. And together with surrounding correspondence it elucidates the motives, costs, and methods of adjustment attending the migration of a particular kind of pioneer—in this case neither impoverished nor untutored—into the West.[1]

Already the possessor of three hundred twenty acres of good land in far-off Kentucky, previously purchased for him by his son David, Meade[2] turned his back on Maycox Plantation with its six hundred acres "of very poor land," of which "a few acres only on the banks were good;" and set out for his western holding in June of 1796. Evils which he had "experienced for a few years past to the East" and a conviction that Kentucky offered the plenty that could support Republican freedom combined to whet

[1] The letters used in this account are among the William Bolling papers in the possession of the Duke University Library. The editor is indebted to Dr. Nannie M. Tilley for calling his attention to this material. According to Mrs. Helen Bullock of the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia, who is writing a biography of Meade, the letter to Mrs. Ann Randolph of September 1, 1796 is one of several with almost the same text. Mrs. Bullock believes that Meade kept a journal of the trip and subsequently copied portions of it into letters to several different correspondents.

[2] David Meade was born July 20, old style, 1744, the son of David and Susannah Everard Meade, was sent to England for his health and education at the age of seven, attended Harrow and other schools there, returned to Virginia in 1761, travelled extensively in the United States in 1765, married Sarah Waters of Williamsburg three years later, had a brief career in the House of Burgesses of Virginia in 1769, and, leaving the estate in Nansemond county which he had inherited from his father, established Maycox Plantation which he settled with his wife and one son in 1774. Maycox lay in Prince George county on the south side of the James river opposite Westover. Here Meade resided until his departure for Kentucky in 1796. Visiting Meade at Maycox, the Marquis François Jean de Chastellux described his host as "of a very amiable but singular, turn of mind, and such as is particularly uncommon in Vir-

his "Kentucky fever."[3] It was a physically complicated task and, as speedily became apparent, an expensive one to move a plantation family to the West. There had to be coaches and a "chair", horses—twenty-one of them—, baggage wagons piled high with household goods, and ultimately houseboats for the river phase of the journey. The horses ran away; the wheels of the baggage wagons frequently broke under the strain of mountain travel; once a wagon itself overturned, upsetting with it "several little negroes" who were riding on top; and the river boats had periodically to be lifted "by all hands" off logs and bars. And there were other hazards peculiar to slave-implemented pioneering. Three of the negro attendants found an opportunity to escape before the caravan had reached Redstone, and another ran away, while drunk, during the overland journey from Limestone to Lexington, Kentucky.[4] Nor was it easy for the family to "bid adieu . . . (perhaps) forever" to friends and relatives in the home environment; but the "Girls performed on hors[e]back admirably;" Sally, the mother, "exulted" on finding the Blue Ridge not "calculated to excite terror;"[5] and on the whole the transmontane stage of the trip proved much less difficult than the travelers had anticipated: "No howling Wolves—croaking Ravens—or growling Bears were heard"; replacing those "savage sounds" were the "plowman's

ginia, since he rarely attends to affairs of interest and cannot prevail upon himself to make his negroes work. He is even so disgusted with a culture wherein it is necessary to make use of slaves that he is tempted to sell his possessions in Virginia and remove to New England." Beyond fifty years of age when he set out for the West, Meade apparently continued to live for more than a quarter of a century there, during which time he contributed in a considerable way to the cultural development of Kentucky, especially in making a showplace of his estate "Chaumière des Prairies" or "du Prairie" where, in small clothes and periwig, he lived a life of Tidewater grace and hospitality. His children included David, Andrew, Sallie who married Charles Willing Byrd, Richard E., William, Hugh K., Susan who married General Nathaniel Massie, influential Democrat, constitution-maker, and leader in Ohio politics, Ann R., and Eliza. See "Autobiography of David Meade," published in 1883 in a pamphlet styled "The Chaumière Papers," edited by Henry J. Peet, in *The William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine,* July and October, 1904, 37-45 and 73-102; M. V. H. Terhune, *More Colonial Homesteads* (New York, 1899), 65-97; and Bishop [William] Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1857?), I, 292-3.

[3] See letter of Samuel Hopkins to John Breckinridge, March 29, 1794, cited in Bernard Mayo, "Lexington: Frontier Metropolis," in *Historiography and Urbanization* (Baltimore, 1941), 23.

[4] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, June 6, 1796. This, as in the case of letters to Mrs. Randolph subsequently cited, may be found in the William Bolling papers, Duke University Library.

[5] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, May 22, 1796.

whistle", the wagoner cracking his whip, and the mower whetting his scythe.[6]

It was the financial rather than the physical hazards of the undertaking which from the outset proved to exceed the travelers' expectations. Wagon hire from the Blue Ridge to Redstone, the point of embarkation on the Monongahela river, amounted to a hundred pounds.[7] As soon as they had crossed the Blue Ridge they had to pay "tavern prices" for provisions for man and beast, a fact which forced the black people upon "short allowance for both meat and bread" before the river voyage was over; and once the caravan had arrived at Lexington, which they reached on July 7, 1796 with "very poor horses and tattered carriages" albeit "in good health and good spirits", costs continued to mount. A sojourn in Lexington while their farm house was being built, with rent for the upper rooms of a two-story brick house at £55 a year, soon made a heavy drain upon Meade's supply of "small funds". Coming thus by experience to the conclusion that "to live well in a [western] Town your expences [sic] will be as great as in the Eastern Towns," he moved his family to the habitation built by his predecessor[8]—a wretched dwelling which his wife and daughters soon made "as tolerable as time and circumstances would allow." But it appeared that for the planter-pioneer arrival in the West brought no decreasing costs.[9] After nearly six months in the Bluegrass, Meade wrote: "We consume so much provisions that it begins to be a serious matter to me . . . it is true I have everything to buy that we did not bring with us except corn of which we have enough to serve us. We are likewise in the way of making enough butter to serve us— the next year we may expect to have less to purchase but we cannot expect to have a sufficient stock of Hogs & Cattle in less than 2 years to supply our Smoke house. Of Wheat we shall have perhaps a thousand bushels next harvest if the crop comes in well tho [sic] considering that it is Cornfield Wheat it may not be more than 7 or 800."[10] As late as June, 1797, almost a year after his arrival, Meade reported that every provision save Indian corn had to be purchased, for there were not yet more than a hundred acres of open ground

[6] David Meade to [John Driver?], August 14, 1796, cited in Mayo, *loc. cit.*, 24.

[7] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, May 22, 1796.

[8] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, October 20, 1796.

[9] In October, 1796, Meade paid two shillings for half a bushel of Indian meal, 15 pence for butter, and 4 pence for beef and mutton. David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, October 20, 1796.

[10] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, December 11, 1796.

on the estate and not three fit for grazing.[11] Not until about ten months after their arrival was their single-story log dwelling ready for occupation; and within a year additions were needed. This time construction was done "in the old Virginia way of frame work," log work having proved to be "more troublesome, less handsome, and I incline to think more costly."[12] Expenses having mounted to a thousand pounds in the seven months since the planter and his family had left for Kentucky,[13] it is apparent that the period of transition was neither cheap nor speedy, and it was Meade's awareness of this that prompted him to warn his nephews that should they undertake a similar removal they ought to have command of a thousand pounds within a year of their arrival and five hundred pounds with them clear of travelling expenses.

Yet in spite of the hazards of the journey and the original expenses and difficulties of settlement, Meade was almost never disheartened. Although on one occasion he confessed that he was not "free from care in this Eldorado,"[14] repeatedly he described Kentucky as "the most fertile tract of country in the world of so large an extent;" at Governor Shelby's farm he saw "realized in this happy place" what he had "only imagined or read in novels";[15]

[11] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, June —, 1797.

[12] The evolution of a frontier dwelling is graphically revealed in the changes which Meade brought about. The original settler had built a cabin consisting of two small rooms with fireplaces and two rooms above under the roof. (David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, October 20, 1796). The log house which Meade caused to be built had four "chambers," a dining room "full twenty feet square," and "an entry ten feet by twenty." The addition, to be done in Virginia frame work, was to include "an addition of two Chambers to join the Dining room by . . . a Lean-to or covered way." It is significant that this building was not put upon the best site; for with the optimism characteristic of the pioneer, Meade "reserved a site about sixty yards from it for a future building which perhaps may never be executed." (David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, June, 1797). Twenty years later, when Horace Holley visited Colonel Meade at Chaumière des Prairies, he found "a cluster of rustic cottages . . . a beautiful sloping lawn . . . groves and walks extending over some acres. Seats, Chinese temples, verdant banks and alcoves" were "interspersed at convenient distances." Horace Holley to [Mrs. Holley], May 27, 1818, quoted in Charles Caldwell, *Discourse on . . . the Rev. Horace Holley . . .* (Boston, 1828), 153-4, quoted in Mayo, *loc. cit.*, 41. Meade's granddaughter described the house as "a villa,—covering a great deal of ground, built in an irregular style, of various materials—wood, stone, brick,—and one mud room, which . . . was quite a pretty tasteful spare bedroom. The part composed of brick was a large octagon drawing room . . . . There was one large square hall, and numerous passageways, lobbies, areas, etc." Terhune, *loc. cit.*, 79.

[13] Mayo, *loc. cit.*, 24.

[14] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, October 20, 1796.

[15] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, September 1, 1796.

nothing was wanting "but a little activity and agricultural knowledge—the fecundity of the soil is astonishing and everything that it produces is excellent of the kind."[16] Health conditions, too, he found favorable. Ague and fevers were less prevalent than in Virginia and aside from dysentery among "the black part of our family," Meade reported as late as 1799 that all had been continuously healthy save for indispositions that were the "common consequences of matrimony."[17] And there was with him as with others the pioneer's confidence that present hardship and privation would give way to future improvement and profit. In Meade's opinion the possessor of two or three thousand pounds and a supply of negroes could not only live "as well or better" than in Virginia but he would be "more in the way of procuring lands for his Children."

Such is the pioneering experience of which the appended letter describes the westward journey. But there is more in the letter than a mere disclosure of the incidents of Meade's migration. Meade was a keen observer; and his picture of trade and traffic on the Ohio river, by pirogue, keel boat, and travelling ark; his comment on the advancing urban development along the Ohio and in Kentucky; and especially his discussion of Kentucky farms, farming methods, and the problems of land purchase there are of real interest for students of western history. He was also an ardent propagandist for the West; and in this respect the letter is typical of the "Kentucky-letters" which induced the migration of other planters from the East. And within the lines is suggested the attitude and reaction of the Virginia planter past middle age, transplanting his slave-implemented establishment from Virginia to the West. It was "a vast undertaking to cross the Appalachian Mountains with a family so helpless as mine," he wrote, "but we are not discouraged."[18]

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[16] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, December 11, 1796.
[17] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, [1799?].
[18] David Meade to Mrs. Ann Randolph, June 6, 1796.

Lexington, September ye 1st 96

My dear friend & Sister[19]—

In the short letter which I wrote you by Mr. O. Byrd[20] I promised you that I would avail myself of the return of Judge Fleming to give you a more particular account of our present circumstances & the prospect we have before us of our future establishment, but will begin first with a narrative of our progress towards this Country and arrival at Lexington to which I may subjoin for the information of your sons particularly Brett & Ryland (who are the most likely to be interested by such information) the observations either phisical (sic) or moral, agricultural or commercial which I have made since we entered the western Country. You have long since been acquainted with our movements as far as our brother Richards[21] in Frederick—from thence we took our departure the 8th day of June & went no farther than Winchester[22] 9th traveled only sixteen miles & put up at a Dutchmans. 10th continued our journey, crossed big Cacapon, and notwithstanding heavy rains which had fallen the preceding evening (which made it most agreeable to ferry over) and showers this afternoon added to very rough roads, we advanced about twenty miles this day and put up at Jo'n Kieners a Saxon [?] 11th forded little Cacapon crossed the So. Branch Mountain, ferried over the So. Branch & got to Frankford upon Paterson's Creek in the evening having advanced this day sixteen miles, the roads remarkably good for a Mountainous Country—one of the large wheels of our baggage Waggon [sic] gave way this afternoon near Springfield, a small Hamlet (within five or six miles of Frankford) where we left it to be repaired. 12th waited for the baggage until twelve

[19] Mrs. Ann Randolph, née Ann Meade, was the wife of Richard Randolph. Meade makes frequent references in his letters to their children, Brett, Ryland, David Meade, Sally, Polly, and Richard. Curles, the Randolph plantation, at which the Meades stopped briefly on their way to Kentucky, stood on the north side of the James river in Henrico county opposite Bermuda Hundred. See *A Map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole Province of Maryland with a part of Pensilvania, New Jersey, and North Carolina,* drawn by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson in 1775.

[20] Colonel Otway Byrd served as aide-de-camp to Washington during the Revolution, held an appointment in the Western Expedition, and in 1797 was elected collector of the port, a post which he held until his death in Norfolk, Va., Sept. 2, 1800. *Virginia Argus,* Sept. 9, 1800.

[21] Richard Kidder Meade, 1746-1805, one of Meade's younger brothers, served as aide-de-camp to Washington and ultimately acquired a thousand acres, which he called the Lucky Hit Plantation, in Frederick county. See *Dictionary of American Biography,* XII, 476-7.

[22] Winchester, the seat of Frederick county, was founded about 1744 at the crossing of two old trails. Several Pennsylvania families had settled nearby in 1732.

o'clock—which being repaired was advancing to join us when the wheel gave way a second time it became now necessary to put new spokes in it all around. we therefore left it at Frankford for repair and proceeding on our journey, crossed the No. Branch of Potowmack [sic], entered Maryland, and arrived at Gwins an excellent Tavern at the foot of the Alleghany Mountains in the Evening, having traveled this day not quite twelve miles. 13th the hired Waggons joined us at about half after eight this morn. our baggage Waggon left at Frankford for repair the day before had advanced within a mile of us when one of the Iron axle trees gave way & we were detained several hours until it was repaired fortunately for us a smiths shop was near. we advanced only six miles this day to Stidgers a German— our fare here was very tolerable, but the civility of the people & their attention to us made our stay here very agreeable. 14th the Iron axle tree of our Baggage Waggon again gave way in the same place this morn, but so near Stidgers where is a good smith that it was well mended. & we proceeded on our journey at a quarter after two in the afternoon— and got to Tomlinsons at the little meadow—eleven miles on in good time. these repeated disasters of the baggage Waggon were really disheartening. Sally however preserved very good spirits. 15th advanced to Simkins's eleven miles eight miles of which is the worst road I had ever seen particularly the ascent & descent of Negroe Mountain the former rocky the latter almost entirely free from stone, but rendered bad by the number and depth of the ruts. here one of our hired Waggons overset without injury to any person or thing altho' there were several little negroes at the top of it. 16th a heavy rain this morning prevented our set[t]ing out before ten o'clock— two miles from Simkins's we crossed the line of Maryland and entered Pen[n]sylvania— six miles further the principal branch of the Yohogana [Youghiogheny] River, at this place called the great crossing & got with ease to Hall's eleven miles from Simkins's— the last mile of this days journey is steep & rough with stone, the rest tolerable. 17th purposing to get as far this day as Union or [illeg.] Town we set out earlier than usual, the distance is twenty-one miles. the big meadows are about half way, memorable for the defeat & capture of the American Hero by the French before the declaration of War in 56—[23] here near the road

[23] In 1754 the French destroyed a fort which the English had begun at the forks of the Ohio and set up Fort Duquesne. George Washington, sent with a small detachment to take possession of this Fort, overcame a French scouting party; but the French, having superior numbers on the Ohio, forced him to surrender at a spot known as the Great Meadows, where he had hastily erected defences.

was inter[r]ed the body of Brad[d]ock the rash British General slain in the same War to the Laurel ridge the roads are pretty good, but the ascent of the Mountain is rough and descent four miles the most so of any we have ever seen from the laurel hill is extensive & beautiful views of the Country watered by the Monongahala river from the foot of the Alleghanys to Union Town[24] is two miles entirely free from stone. the Town is pretty well built, handsomely situated and well watered. the growth of timber for some miles about the town is altogether white Oak, and very beautiful. 18th David, Geo. Royster & Upton went early this Morn to Redstone[25] old fort for the purpose of procuring Boats and the rest of the Company followed at half past twelve. the roads not being good and the Country hilly we did not arrive at Redstone until eight in the Evening. 19th waiting for our hired Waggons we employed ourselves in making preparations for our voyage some[illeg.] roofing was put to the Boat intended for our white family—we this day had for dinner Pearch [sic] of the western waters—one of them weighed after being cleaned more than 6½ lb—a few days afterwards in the Ohio we purchased one weighing 20 lb—everything being in readiness we at nine o'clock June ye 20th embarked in two Boats all our Company, goods and carriages—the Horses we left under the care of Geo. Royster to be conducted by him & two negroe boys to Wheeling about a hundred miles below Pittsburg the river being very low & continuing to fall fast, our floating houses moved very slowly. those vehicles are generally twelve feet wide & of various lengths. the two we had were 40 & 34 long—of the forty near two-thirds covered with a roof of boards put on in the featheredge way. this divided into two apartments formed a very comfortable habitation for our family which was increased by the addition of a Mr. Lee, a gentleman from Hagerstown in Maryland who requested a passage as far as Wheeling where he has a Store,[26]—about five in the afternoon of this first days voyage in

[24] Uniontown, founded about 1769 and situated on Redstone creek, was incorporated as a borough in 1796. It was known as Beesontown until after the Revolution.

[25] Brownsville, on the site of Redstone Old Fort, was founded in 1785 by Thomas and Basil Brown. It was an early ship-building center and was the point at which pioneers embarked on the Monongahela river.

[26] This incident suggests that in making his westward voyage, the pioneer himself and the facilities he used became agencies in western commerce and transportation. "Kentucky boats," like those which Meade used, were the standard water vehicle for travelling families. "The hull of such a boat was made of big square timbers of hard wood, and it drew from a foot to two and a half feet of water when fully laden . . . . Upright timbers four feet high and four or five inches thick were set on top of the

passing a narrow stony bar, our boat stuck upon it—by considerable exertion with all hands out into the water we however got off in about a quarter of an hour,— the other boats went clear, warned by our disaster. after sunset we ran upon a log, not one of those call'd in these waters a Sawyer,[27] but one firmly fixed in the sand or mud at bottom. the danger now appeared to be greater than when we were a little before on the bar, but we had again the good fortune to get clear in a short time without any other injury than having had our fears excited on account of delay, the river continuing to fall fast. 21st we this day stuck upon shoals of large stone which made bars from one side to the other of the river—two or three times without injury to our boats. Just below the confluence of the Yohogany & Monongahala we took in a Pilot to conduct us thro' Braddocks Riffle or Ripple as all the shoals in the western Rivers are call'd, where there are falls or rapids. this called Braddock's is the most considerable in the Monongehala & most difficult & dangerous to pass. it is about twelve miles from Pittsburg. notwithstanding the precaution used in hireing a Pilot both boats stuck at different parts but were got under way—without injury or much delay—our voyage the rest of this night as well as the preceding was without obstruction. 22nd arrived at Pitt[28] (as it is usually called in these parts for brevity) about nine o'clock this Morn. & stayed there until three in the afternoon (the whole time employed in procuring stores) when we continued our Voyage now down the Ohio. from this time the scenes presented to our view in the whole course of our passage were entirely different from what my imagination had ever represented to me & by which I had hitherto been misled. whether or not the Idea I had formed of the lands lying immediately upon the river was grounded upon representations of those who had navigated it I will not positively say, but why should I have supposed it so dif-

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hull, and the whole was then enclosed, like a house, with heavy planks. A similar roof completed the structure, which contained a barricaded entrance, loopholes; a window or two and a trap-door for upward egress. The flatboat floated at the mercy of the current, and was steered by a big sweep as long as the vessel itself. A small craft of the sort required the attention of three men. Its cost was about three or four dollars for each foot of length . . . . the livestock was kept out-of-doors, in an open yard added to one end of the boat." Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America* (4 vols., Indianapolis, Indiana, 1915), 284-6.

[27] A sawyer was a tree fast in the bed of a stream, with its branches projecting to the surface and bobbing up and down with the current—Dict.

[28] According to the census of 1800, Pittsburgh had a population of 1565. For description of Pittsburgh in 1802, see François A. Michaux, *Travels* . . . in *Early Western Travels*, ed. by R. G. Thwaites (Cleveland, 1904), III, 156-161.

ferent from what it is unless I had been told that the famed Ohio in its passage of so many hundred miles to unite with the Mi[s]sissip[p] i watered for the most part a Mountainous & ruggid (sic) Country— but so very different is the truth that from Pittsburg (where indeed the lands are extreamly (sic) broken but not Mountainous) the Country on each side of the river as you recede from that town become more & more level & in the whole course of the river as far as we have navigated it no very high lands or distant mountains are to be seen. On the contrary the Ohio here & there mildly murmuring in more places almost sleeping—but generally gently sweeping thro' the finest & most extensive val[l]ey perhaps in the world— on one side or the other of the river, are extensive low grounds, or bottoms as they are here called, a great part of the distance on both sides—but always on one side or the other—so extreamly rich, that (in the judgment of those individuals of our Company who were frequently on shore) the most indifferent of it is better than the best upon James River below the Falls has ever been, this eulogy of the Ohio Country may seem to my friends to be but the effusions of an imagination always rather disposed to be visionary but now warmed by the novelty of the scene,—that it is not the case, cannot at this time be proved & I shall submit to you & others the credit of such facts as I may advance upon the evidence of my opinion, and they will be established with, or rejected by you, as you may think my judgment cool or intemperate. the first impressions which the scenes I have witnessed made upon my mind are not likely ever to be removed, for as often as I contemplate the subject, I feel convictions of the propriety & justness of them, firmly persuaded that the River Ohio waters the finest and most extensive rich Country on this Globe, founding my belief on what I have heard from others but much more upon what I have seen with my own eyes. it is natural enough for me to anticipate with pleasure the future g[r]andeur of these western regions, it requires no preternatural spirit of prophesy to foresee what in the nature of things must inevitably come to pass (unless nature should violate he[r] own laws which is impossible) an immense population on the banks of the Ohio—Cities, Towns & Villages never out of the travelers view and more of them than are at present or ever can be hereafter on the banks of the Rhine or Danube, in ten or at most fifteen years,[29] there will not be a tree left on the bank of the Ohio but such as may be intended for ornament— before that time the voyage from Pittsburg will be

[29] This is a significant suggestion that the pioneer foresaw the urban as well as the agrarian development of the West.

taken by people of fortune for pleasure— already it is agreeable. there was but one day during our passage to Limestone (so astonishing has been the progress of population) that we did not procure from on shore both morn and afternoon Milk & Cream. settlements are made daily. we saw many where the belted Trees[30] were yet alive & many where the patches of Corn were not more extensive than your Garden. little more than eighteen months ago there was danger in landing upon either shore. when we came down some of our company went on shore ten times a day. we had a punt constantly plying between our boats & the land sometimes on one side sometimes on the other— I myself (cautious as I usually am & at that time rendered so to a degree of timidity by the discharge which I had) went several times to land & generally on the Indian Shore[31] where I sometimes walked a mile or two in the woods along the bank & at some distance from it. on the eve of this day about dark in passing a Riffle or rapid both boats stuck fast, but were extricated with much exertion in half an hour. we however secured our boats to the shore a little below for the night, having been informed that there was another more difficult of passage about three miles below us. 23rd. at sunrise got under way, being here thirteen miles from Pitt. passed the difficult rapid call'd the dead riffle & between eleven & twelve passed by the mouth of big Beaver Creek twenty-eight miles from Pitt. Fort McIntosh is within a quarter of a mile below on the same side where is likewise a Ferry. this day passed several Creeks and George Town where is a Ferry. continued to drop down the river all night. 24th passed thro the Mingo bottom and by the mouth of Buffiloe (sic) Creek where is a Hamlet of several well looking two story log houses & two of brick not finished. at half after two in the night we moored our boats at Wheeling twelve or fourteen miles below Buffiloe. 25 Wheeling is a small Hamlet in situation & population very like Buffiloe but the houses are not so good. Col. [illeg.] who resides here is building a pretty two story small brick house. our horses had been at Wheeling two or three days before us. we now embarked them but were obliged to take them out again, the horse boat proving so leaky that it became necessary to caulk the lower seam almost all round, we in consequence remained where we were all night, and did not proceed on our voyage until after sunup the next morn. 26th passed the mouths of several Creeks this day & continued our

[30] The practice of "belting" or "girdling"—making a circular cut around the bark of a tree to kill it—was a speedy way of preparing timbered soil for cultivation.

[31] A reference to the southern shore of the Ohio.

course all night. 27th this morning at eight near forty miles from Wheeling we entered the eighteen mile reach, continued drop[p]ing down all night and on the 28 at nine in the morn arrived at Marietta, mouth of the Muskingum, about ninety miles below Wheeling. here the wind riseing [sic] at S. W. and blowing fresh we lay by until ye evening & landed our horses to pasture. at seven o'clock got the horses on board again & moved down. we had advanced only two miles when thunder sq[u]all coming up we brought our boats too [sic] on the Harrison shore[32] for the night which proved very tempestuous with unceasing rain, some part of the time very heavy, upon this occasion our old dining room carpet did us good service. it had been drawn over the chamber part of our cabbin (sic) in a [illeg.] rain whilst we lay at Wheeling. 29th this morning after the rain was the first since we embarked at Redstone without a considerable fog on the river. twelve miles from Muskingum passed the mouth of little Kenahwa [Kanawha] nearly opposite to which is a settlement called [illeg.] which continues on the bank of the river several miles. here we saw a Mill in the river upon boats,—continued moving all night. 30th passed the [illeg.] falls this afternoon at two o'clock piloted by a very obliging Pirogueman who had kept company with us from Muskingum. this good man was from grove Creek on the Virginia shore twelve miles below Wheeling and was bound to Cincinnati the capital of the N. W. territory with seventeen or eighteen barrels all of them flour but one of Maple sugar in a very long Canoe or as they are called on the Ohio Pirogues[33]— the falls are the most considerable rapids in the River except the great rapids of Louisville— continued as usual moving on all this night. July 1st at eight this morning arrived at Point pleasant, the mouth of the great Kanawha,—here we were so fortunate as to purchase the carcass of a large Doe just brought in by a hunter. this proved a very reasonable acquisition, for our black people were at short allowance of both meat & bread; we had found provisions of kinds for man as well as horse scarce & very dear ever since we left Winchester. we had purchased every article

[32] A reference to the northern shore of the Ohio river. William Henry Harrison, after serving in the battle of Fallen Timbers, remained on garrison duty at North Bend, and later at Fort Washington (Cincinnati). In 1798 he resigned from the army and in July was appointed secretary of the Northwest territory. In 1799 he was elected first delegate to Congress from the Northwest territory and in 1800 was appointed governor of Indiana territory.

[33] A pirogue was a very large canoe, often made from a log forty to fifty feet long and six or eight feet wide. It was capable of carrying a family and several tons of household goods.

at Tavern prices, our grain had uniformly cost us a shilling per gallon, nor did we find it otherwise in Kentucky. Indian Corn between Limestone & this place included has been, & yet is, five shillings a bushel— Oats the same until a plentiful new crop has reduced them to eighteen pence— our Doe was the cheapest provisions we had hitherto met with, being only two pence a pound, a price which would have been thought high at any time before this Summer,— we left point pleasant after a short stay having had very little inducement to land there other than that of sending our horses on shore to graze for an hour or two, but which had at this time been like to cost us much vexation for by the negligence of the Boys set to look after them they [got] out of the liments [sic] of the Hamlet at this place and we were in danger of not recovering them for several days,—fortunately for us, however, a man was coming along the road towards the point, stop[p]ed & stayed them until our people got up & drove them back— four miles below point pleasant is the French settlement, Gallipolis,[34] on the opposite shore it consists of a long string of small log huts built adjoining each other with some two story frame houses of but indifferent appearance— that this settlement is not in a flourishing state is not to be wondered at. it had been made several years back at a time when (probably) there was rather a cessation of hostilities with the Indians than a regular ratified peace, and the poor people have had every [sic] since until within eighteen months to contend with all the evils which could be brought upon them by war, and that with a savage enemy. You may judge what must have been the wretched situation of those people (some of whom were genteel and many very excellent artists) when you are informed of those tactics in this western country on the frontiers or any exposed places— whilst part of the company (of whom perhaps are the women & small boys) are cultivating the ground, the men & youths with their Riffles [sic] walk round the field all the time to prevent a surprize by the Savages— under such unfavorable circumstances the French settlement of Gallipolis could not thrive many valuable workmen in different arts withdrew to other parts more safe from Indian depredation— those who remained have met with another

[34] Gallipolis was founded in October, 1790, on the Ohio river, opposite the mouth of the Great Kanawha. It was settled by some six hundred French immigrants whose interest in America had been excited by Joel Barlow acting as agent of the Scioto Associates who had an option on the land. A hasty purchase was made through the efforts of William Duer, and Rufus Putnam was engaged to build their huts; but the Frenchmen soon found that the artisan's paradise promised by Barlow proved to be a region of hardship, privation, and financial failure.

discouragement in addition to those which have been mentioned— their title to the land was more than questionable— they were (to the discredit of the American character) shamefully cheat'd— however Congress has befriended them so far as to secure to them the property in a small part of the lands immediately about their Town. here David & Geo. Royster went on shore & procured a few stores in part of which was a large loaf of the best bread we had heretofore seen in the western Country. continued moving downwards all this night and on ye 2[nd] passed the big and little Sandy, the little Scioto, and about dawn of Day on ye 3[r]d passed the big Scioto near fifty miles above Limestone, at about eleven this Forenoon we met three large keel Boats[35] rowed by naked Copper colored men—of very savage appearance and working with prodigious exertion. I had little doubt [to] what race of men they belonged & notwithstanding my reason assured me that there was nothing like hostility to be expected from them my fears were all awakened and I will confess that I did not feel altogether easy until they were out of sight which was in a very short time for they plied their oars with a degree of agility and force unknown on James River— I observed that white men were at the Helm of each Boat from which circumstance I formed the conjecture that they were Indian traders & that being at peace with the Indians they had hired some of them to navigate the Boats— the number of copper color'd men were probably over twenty in all the boats we ha[i]led each other as we passed at the distance of about a hundred & twenty yards but we did not understand what they said either in questioning us or in reply to us, but we should do them the justice to say that they behaved with savage civility for we could distinguish a sound articulating how do mistress— a small distance below where we met the Boats and thirty miles above Limestone are salt works where David landed and was informed that Boats we had seen were from the Illinois Country bound to Pittsburg loaded with Furs & Lead, and that the people who navigated them were a mongrel race between French & Indian—they are said to make excellent watermen,— a little after sunrise on the 4th of July being the day on which Inde-

[35] Keel boats were protected against the shock of collision with submerged objects by a heavy timber about four inches wide and equally thick extending the whole length of the bottom of the vessel. Forty to seventy-five feet long and seven to nine feet wide, they carried a mast and sails. One steersman and two men at the sweeps could navigate the keel boat down the stream. Movement against the current was effected by the wind or by the action of men at setting poles. Such boats cost $2.50 to $3.00 for every foot of length. They were introduced on the western waters in about 1788.

pendence was declared, the great festival of America, we grounded our Boats or floats on the shores at Limestone[36]—which receives all the little consequence it professes from its having been heretofore the only tolerable safe place for emigrants to land at and is at present perhaps not far from its highest point of prosperity for there are now much more convenient places a little above— at best it is but a trifling Hamlet scarcely equal to Wheeling— a great part of the day was spent in debarking everything in our boats & purchasing for the journey— at five o'clock in the evening we set out with very poor horses and tattered Carriages. we had hired only one Waggon which could carry only part of our baggage the rest we stored at Limestone,— we found no little difficulty in ascending a very high hill (call it mountain) beginning at the back of the Hamlet which stands on a narrow slip of low ground. it was nearly dark when we reached Washington. only four miles from the landing in the course of this short journey Henry in a drunken frolic (his passion for which he continues to indulge more freely than ever) deserted us, going off before my face in the woods— he was the next morning taken up at Limestone & together with David's Pointer who had likewise absconded, and were both found tied & confined in a warehouse— the poor drunken Henry joined us the next evening—we have from necessity employed him to wait upon us in the house ever since having no other male house servant than the little Boy Dian — we now feel very sensibly the loss of Baddow, as we did during the continuance of our journey the want of so good a Postillion as Syphax— Washington[37] is the second town in Kentucky for population. it at present consists of one long street & stands upon waveing [sic] ground which will prevent its ever appearing to advantage— the houses are partly of logs & partly framed there are some stone houses tolerably well built & sizeable upon the whole I do not think it a handsome town— the Country in the vicinity is extreamly fertile but more waveing than any other part of Kentucky I have yet seen— we found very good quarters at Washington in a two-story log tavern the next morn-

[36] Limestone, according to Michaux in 1802, consisted "only of about thirty or forty houses constructed with wood. . . . Built upwards of fifteen years, . . . it has long been the place where all the emigrants landed who came from the Northern States by the way of Pittsburgh, and is still the staple for all sorts of merchandise sent from Philadelphia and Baltimore to Kentucky." Michaux, *loc. cit.*, 195. The route from Limestone to Lexington was the customary highway for travellers coming to Kentucky by way of the Ohio river.

[37] Washington was first settled by Simon Kenton, pioneer hunter, in 1784. It was laid out as a town in 1786.

ing not very early— ye 5th we proceeded on our journey and without meeting with any but petty disasters of the minor class we got that night to a mean Cabbin [sic] on Johnsons fork of the Licking where our horses found much better fare than we did Sally & the Girls had now become such veteran travelers that they were willing to make a sacrafice [sic] of some part of their own comfort to the good of our horses. 6th we moved onwards to a Cabbin within six miles of Paris (Bourbon Courthouse) the distinction between a log house & Cabbin is that the former has a shingled roof—whereas the other has a roof of slabs put on without nails & secured by long poles or rather logs stretched lengthways of the roof to keep the slabs or boards down. in these Cabbins many opulent and some Genteel people live in them even at this time & I am told that they are by the latter made more than barely comfortable— we have not yet met with any in this stile [sic]— from Johnson's Fork a visible change in the quality of the soil takes place. hitherto it was all fine, it was now changed to Oakland and what is here call'd poor to the Blue lick on the main Fork of the Licking about six miles—but of this there is great part that would be thought good with you & little very bad. within this distance of Kentucky poor land are several good plantations on the road. the knobs about the Blue licks are so extreamly sterile that a few trees only are to be seen upon them & a very thin herbage. the cause of this appearance probably is, that the earth in the immediate vicinity has been so strongly impregnated with salt that the surface of the earth has been licked off by the Buffiloe & other wild animals— at these Licks about fifty bushels of salt is daily made from different springs, not all the property of one person. I was informed that there is water enough for two hundred bushels daily— this place is memorable in the annals of Kentucky for the many that have been killed at it by the Indians & one or two considerable defeats— after breakfasting here we continued our journey for about six or seven miles thro' a drought or narrow valley rising all that distance the land being of inferior quality but much of it very good. the lodging this night was much worse than the night before, for it was the filthiest Cabbin we had heretofore been in. 7th we were on the road by times this morning and got to Paris in good time for breakfast. this village is very thriveing [sic] & well built, more of Brick & Stone than of Wood— of the former are several large well-looking houses, of the number a new Courthouse not complete

of stone— we arrived this evening before sunset at Lexingtor all well— it was difficult for our friend Charles Byrd (who h: been joined by David a few hours before our arrival) to procu any kind of private quarters— he however did succeed in g[[t]ing the two upper rooms of a two story framed house whe after remaining about seven or eight days we removed to bett lodgings in a more agreeable part of the Town which we ha taken for three months at the rate of Fifty five pounds per annu we here have the upper & garret rooms of a two story brick hou — two large apartments & a closet on each floor— the popul tion of Lexington is unusually great for the extent of it which the latter respect does not exceed my expectations, but if we tal a retrospective view of it to a point of time not more than sev[or eight years back it must astonish. here are now very ma[(I will not say elegant) handsome brick houses— and some few [stone—framed houses likewise & many of logs but chiefly tv storys high— of the inhabitants are several genteel familie chiefly from the northern States. many new houses are now buil ing, more of them of brick than of timber. Col. Geo. Nicholas is about [to build] a large brick house in this Town intended f[his future residence. Sally and Her Daughters have formed [intimate acquaintance with several very agreeable Ladies and well pleased are they with the place that I fear they will leave

[38] Lexington, having sprung from a wilderness camp in about 17[7] was at the time of Meade's arrival assuming the aspect of a settled co[r] munity. This "Philadelphia of Kentucky," the crossroads for mercant[ventures going down the river to New Orleans and land caravans fr[o] Pittsburgh and Limestone, was the political and economic center of weste America. With a population of about 1600 and some 300 houses, it e ceeded Pittsburgh, Frankfort, and Cincinnati in size. Known as a weste "Athens," it boasted Transylvania Seminary, two newspapers, a publ library, churches, dancing schools, book stores, and an agreeable, gente society. See Lewis Condict, "Journal of a Trip to Kentucky in 1795," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, n. s., IV, 120; a[l] Bernard Mayo, *Henry Clay, Spokesman of the New West* (Boston, 1937 54 ff.

[39] George Nicholas, ca. 1743-1799, a native of Williamsburg, Virgini and a student at William and Mary College, followed a Revolutiona career with the practice of law in the Kentucky district. He was a di tinguished member of the constitutional convention of Kentucky in 17[9] and taking an active part in Kentucky politics, especially after 1798, he w a leader of the rising Republican party and a proponent of the Kentucl resolutions. He was interested in land speculation, was the first attorn general of Kentucky, and the first law professor at Transylvania Un versity. *The Biographical Encyclopaedia of Kentucky*, (Cincinnati, 1878 11; *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIII, 482-3.

with reluctance[40]— such briefly is this chief Town of these western regions—situated in the center of the most fertile tract of Country in the world of so large an extent— except the lands upon Licking near the blue licks above described, the cliffs of Kentucky river & of Dicks river, mere margins, to which may be added a little which I have lately seen about the Knob lick, four or five miles from Danville, I have nowhere seen any but superlatively rich land— an oak Tree is as rare here as a wallnut [sic] upon high ground in lower Virginia— Sugar Trees or sweet Maple,— Hackberries, wild Cherries, black & white Wallnuts, Buckeye [?] (a species of Horse Chestnut) Ash, large & very lofty, Locust of both kinds but most of the fruit bearing kind, lofty and large as pine trees with you— Hickory of the scaly bark kind—sometimes Beech and in a few places only Poplars of an enormous size—such & some few others are the forest trees of this rich Country, such is the umbrage cast over the face of the earth by those vast trees that the air circulating in the Woods is always cool which renders traveling here more pleasant than I have found it elsewhere— the undergrowth is chiefly Spice brush & Papa— in many places are found a thick undergrowth of young [illeg.] Maple— since Cane range and other wild herbage has been cut out in the thick settled parts weeds not agreeable to Cattle have taken place— this Country is therefore now in a worse state for supporting large stocks than it has ever heretofore been in or can well be in hereafter— the progress of Agriculture scarcely keeps pace with that of Population—already, however you find upon ye Farms (scarcely with a single exception) a Timothy Meadow— when the Farmer has had time to open more lands the grass field will increase in a ratio beyond the grounds for corn & small grain. Cattle will increase in numbers & quality in proportion to the extention of the improved pasture lands— some in these parts have inclosed woods and cleared away the underbrush and not a few are following the example. the experiment has been long since made with success—the woods thus prepared are sewed with greensward, and soon makes excellent pasture—such is the extream fertility of this Country that wherever air & sun can get to the earth it produces weeds of prodigious size— the most prevailing in open places are the James Town weed and Iron weed or

[40] The Meades soon became acquainted with many Virginians of good family; and while Sally at first pined for the Tidewater, her "vapor soon exhaled and after a Ball or two—many Tea parties, and much flirtation— her Ladyship soon became as zealous a Lexingtonian as any in it." Meade to Joseph Prentis, December 12, 1796 and June 13, 1797, quoted in Mayo, *loc. cit.*, 24-5.

(as it is sometimes call'd) Devils bit— whole acres are thickly set with elder bushes mixed in with the latter weed— the James Town weed is here said not to be the native production of this region. I have heard some story about an old Woman's bring [ing] the seed from the Eastward to cultivate for medicinal purposes, but I receive this as an Old Womans story and will spend no time about the investigation of it, well persuaded that the same hand which planted that weed at James Town could with the same ease do the same thing in Kentucky. I have lately been about forty miles from this place in company with my friend Mr. O. Byrd— then on his return to Virginia—we crossed the Kentucky river by ferry at the mouth of Hickman a stream emptying its waters into the other. the Kentucky differs from all Rivers I have ever seen. the banks & cliffs are mountain high where I have seen it. there are no low grounds on either side and the nearest points on the summits on each side do not appear to be two hundred yds apart. there are on one side or the other, sometimes on both, perpendicular Cliffs of undetermined h[e]ight, but I think from two to three hundred feet. I incline to an opinion that the waters of the Kentucky seldom rise within four hundred feet of the level of the lands between that River & this Town, but in this judgment it is very possible I may greatly err.—the Cliffs of Kentucky river & of the little streams belonging to it are a beautiful kind of limestone which breaks off in the most convenient flakes immaginable [sic] for building. it is more like marble than flint and of an ash colour. the Ferry at the mouth of Hickman is about twenty Kentucky miles of at least two thousand yards from Lexington. from thence to Danville is here call'd twelve or thirteen miles. in that distance we crossed the River Dick or Dicks river: something featured like the parent Kentucky. Danville is one of the first settled places in Kentucky — built chiefly of timber not a fourth of the size of Lexington — and notwithstanding it is situated in a delightful Country it does not seem to be in so thriveing [sic] a way as I expected to find it. it is however rather improveing [sic] than declineing [sic] From Danville to Col. Nicholas's is five miles, at which seat we arrived but little before nine o'clock at night—having been near six hours rideing [sic]— what is call'd at most twenty miles. Col. Nicholas's Farm has a very high reputation here & I think very deservingly. it is one of the most extensive in Kentucky— one of the finest springs I have ever seen inclosed in one of the largest Dairys of Stone with as favorable contents is diverted from its natural course & in its passage of three quarters of a mile first watering a considerable quantity of meadow turns

a water wheel of twenty feet in diamiter [sic] which carries two pr. of Mill stones and all the Year, for a Manufacturing wheat Mill— after spending a day and two nights at Col. Nicholas's we went to visit the late Governor Mr. Shelby[41] who lives not much if any out of the rout[e] to the Crab Orchard whither our friend was destined—being heretofore the great rendezvous of people going into the settlement (as all the eastern Country is here called)— we got to Mr. Shelbys a little before dinner & here I found a little Arcadia—tho' not altogether the pastoral life—the fabl'd Golden age seems to be here revived & I have seen realized in this happy place what I had only imagined or read in novels— the fertility of the soil & other phisical [sic] advantages of the Estate—the excellent management of the Farm, the admirable domestic oeconomy, the concord which prevails in the family, the great profusion of every necessary & comfort of life here enjoyed in equal measure by every individual of the place added to the genuine hospitallity [sic] & engaging manners of the truely [sic] worthy pair who preside renders this the most delightful rural retreat imaginable. pause for a moment & take a view of the above rough but faithful picture, and then suppose the whole scene reversed confusion take place of order—treaties trampling with regal insolence over rights founded upon the laws of Nature and of God—and that vile despoiler Jays treaty[42] with Britain most unjustly wresting from the virtuous Shelbys the reward of

[41] Isaac Shelby, 1750-1826, a native of Maryland, first came to Kentucky in 1775 as surveyor in the employ of Henderson. Service in the Virginia legislature from Washington county and in the North Carolina legislature were the prelude to his activities as a framer of the constitution of Kentucky and as the first governor of that state. He was a distinguished farmer and a participant in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. *The Biographical Encyclopaedia of Kentucky,* 11-12; *Dictionary of American Biography,* XVII, 60-62.

[42] Meade's reaction to the Jay treaty was typically that of the Jeffersonian and the Kentuckian. The Kentucky country was violently anti-Federalist following 1794. Jacobin in sentiment, they resented any slights to France and tried to force the Washington administration either to abandon or protect the West by removing British garrisons from American soil and giving relief from Indian depredations. They resented especially in the Jay treaty the provision that British creditors might recover all bona fide debts except those paid by state law into the state treasury during the war. They felt that Jay had played into England's hands by failing to make what he could of the counter-claims of American owners for indemnity for slaves carried away by the British army, and by consenting, as Professor Bemis has said, "to the discreditable principle that British claimants need not exhaust the resources of American justice before appealing to a mixed debt commission at Philadelphia, while American claimants must travel through the whole hierarchy of British courts before appealing to the mixed spoliations commission at London." Samuel F. Bemis, *Jay's Treaty* (New York, 1923), 260.

years of toil & savage warfare— it is said that claims which have been dormant for more than thirty years are now brought forward by certain Britains [sic] who were officers in America during the war of 56— one of the number for five thousand acres covers the three thousand on which Col. Shelby the late Governor lives— that Gentleman was an active Commander of Militia upon the frontiers of the Carolinas during the time the British were in Charleston particularly when Cornwallis made his Campaign to the South— he participated in the victory gained over Ferguson, under the command of Campbell, was next to the chief in rank & it is said here that the glory of the achievment [sic] was chiefly due to him. Such is the man whose just right is sacrificed to a detestable treaty, my passions exclaim—no amity with Britain— & may an American Administration partial to that Nation to a degree of servility immediately give place [to] another more grateful, more Republican & Gallican— my friend Mr. Byrd & myself parted upon Col. Shelbys farm. He directing His course for Virginia has had I fear a very unpleasant journey as the weather has been uncommonly hot ever since & yet continues so— it is the longest season of hot weather we have had since our arrival in Kentucky, but the Thermomiter [sic] is seldom as high here by day as in lower Virginia—here are not so many hot days and much cooler nights than to the eastward— the ague & fever are not unknown but it is far from being general, as with you. the inhabitants of certain places upon the rivers, and some few inland, where there are Mill ponds or other stagnant waters, are subject to it. Bilious complaints are more frequent, but I incline to believe not so much so as in Virginia. the criterion by which I judge is this— that in Lexington there are only three Gentlemen of the faculty to have any practice— the Town & outlots contain it is said three thousand inhabitants. the County of Fayette in which it stands is extreamly populous & so are the adjoining Counties with but few prac[ti]tioners of physic in them. now I am well convinced that the same population in lower Virginia would find employ for four or five times as many medical men—dysenterys were very prevalent when we first came to this place— and several Children died of them within a few days after o[u]r arrival. some of the black part of our family have had, and some still have, disorders of that character nor have the whites altogether escaped, but chiefly myself who have had something in that way with short cessation ever since my first coming into the Country.— I may safely venture to assert that no part of Virginia is so thickly settled as Fayette the County our residence is to be in, there are but very few who hold more than

three hundred acres—many as low as a hundred, fifty, and even twenty-five. there is no part of this populous County that is more so than it is immediately about our little Estate which a late acquisition by purchase has made in the opinion of our neighbors a large one. to Davids purchase last Summer I have lately added two hundred acres more of fine first rate land, which extends our Estate to Five hundred & twenty, with a promise of twenty acres more if recovered— for the two hundred I am to give four pounds per acre— it is now a very desireable [sic] tract, and in my judgment only wants one of those large copious springs very rare here, and a str[e]am leading from it thro' the land, to be one of the finest situations in Kentucky. the place where we are about [to build?] our temporary log houses & where our future more permanent one is to be built is now a wood of large trees— Poplar, Ash, Wallnut, Hickory, &c. the handsomest of these are to remain, and the rest removed. already we have cleaned up all the spice & pa-pa bushes and many of the trees. when the work is completed we shall sew it in Timothy & Greensward seed— the shade here will not prevent the growth of the grass and will yield an abundant crop of hay. the spot contains about six or seven acres, is very commanding, the ground descending in a very easy slope for three or four hundred yards waveing [sic] to the south. to the east & north a very small & gentle slope into a plane which continues to our line on the west side where the land is open and an apple orchard planted. the descent is first easy & by degrees more steep until it falls to the valley where our springs are. the best of them issues from a rock cave in a lime-stone sink, runs only a few yards, and sinks under our great Cavern in which Geo Royster & our overseer lately measured four hundred & twenty yards following the course of it under ground, the spring is at present but small, the water is notwithstanding of good quality and as cool as any I have drank [sic]. we shall endeavor to increase the quantity of water by deepening the spring which will be difficult, having rock to remove. Fame has in most particulars done justice to Kentucky in your parts but in the article of water it does not appear to me that she has—it has been said that there are very few springs of water which never cease to run— I do affirm upon the authority of all whom I have consulted (some of whom are men of the most unquestionable truth) to which I may add the evidence of my own experience that no Country can well abound more with springs sufficient for domestic purposes, and those never failing, but it is but candid to admit that the number of bold ones sufficient for watering Meadows and carrying Mills are scarce,—and that here are but few streams:

the lateral branc[h]es of what are call'd rivers but what fail of affording water for Mills in the Summer . . . the Lexington Market is furnished with the best Mutton in the World. I never saw any elsewhere so fat. the Beef is sometimes very fine, such as in the Richmond & Petersburg markets is never seen so early in the year. every day forward it improves. Veal is not frequently met with in this Market and the little that comes to it very indifferent for the obvious reason that they know not how to make it & if they did the price would not pay for the trouble of making it fine. Shoat or fresh Pork is not common—no place can abound with more or better vegetables. these are tolerably cheap, but meats are high.—Mutton & Beef four pence pr pound. — we have had little of any other kind, but suppose the price of Veal & Shoat is as high if not higher than Mutton & Beef. Poultry is in quality & price much as it was in the neighborhood of Maycox. as agriculture improves in this Country the meats sent to Lexington Market must grow better & better—except Mutton that cannot be better— at present the farmer is at no cost or trouble to prepare meats for Market— every kind of flesh brought to it is just what wild woods make it Fruits are as yet very scarce except Peaches which are here in very great quantities and great variety notwithstanding vast numbers of trees have fail'd. horse loads come in here daily. sometimes a waggon loaded with them drives into the Market square. every farm which has been settled more than a year has in it an apple & peach orchard— the former are rather scarce, the apple being a tree of slower growth than the peach. Few orchards of that fruit have been planted long enough to bear abundantly in a very few years it will be a fine Cyder [cider] country the old peach orchards are a beautiful sight—they are generally planted at not more than fourteen feet apart, are of vast size and form so thick a shade that not a ray of the sun ever penetrates to the earth beneath. it would be the same thing with the apple orchards likewise if the trees were not placed at a greater distance than I ever remember to have seen them in Virginia. Mellons [sic] of both kinds are in tolerable plenty here but very dear, particularly the watermellon— the means of subsistence is greater here I do verily believe than any part of the habitable Globe— and you may live not only well but cheap—if you live in the Country & cultivate a Farm— but on the contrary to live well in a Town your expences will be as great as in the Eastern Towns— how abundantly and handsomely would some of my Virginia friends live in Kentucky upon two or three hundred acres of land, one acre is as good as another & every one will make meadow. new comers can be at no loss (if

they have Cash) to secure an Estate to their taste in any part of this State. no such credit is given here as in Virginia— one half down or at least one third is required when I say payed [sic] down I do not mean so prompt but that indulgence for a month or perhaps two may be generally obtained. there prevails in these thick settled parts a prodigious spirit for removeing [sic] to Green River notwithstanding which it causes no fall in the price of Lands which for twenty miles about Lexington are from three to six pounds pr. Acre. there are many valuable farms for sale at this time within the above mentioned distance, and several very near our Estate, how much it would contribute to our happiness if some of our friends in Virginia were inclined [to] come out & settle here— particularly Brett & Ryland who I think might find it only greatly to their advantage but much to their satisfaction & I think the command of about one thousand pounds within twelve months of the time of their arrival here, having one half of that sum with them clear of traveling expences would enable either of them to fix upon two or three hundred acres where I would wish them, & where I think they would be well pleased to be— the State of Kentucky has nearly finished a fine Waggon road to the Cumberland Mountain it is supposed to be complete about this time. this new road shortens the distance. next summer it may be expected that a much easier & cheaper passage into this Country will be found thro' the Wilderness than heretofore— Judge Fleming has been for some time down towards the falls of Ohio— I have promised to meet him at Gen'l Scott's on his way up & for that purpose shall go to Mr. Shorts tomorrow who lives on my way to the Generals— in the belief that the Judge will make but a short stay at Lexington & will proceed immediately towards Virginia, I shall prepare my letter before I meet him, that I may enjoy his society the little time we are together without interruption. the foregoing sheets, my dear Sister, containing little else but a kind of narrative of our progress to this Country—and a variety of information upon the present state of Kentucky &c not (I trust) calculated to deceive or mislead any whom I mean to inform— You may if you please permit them to be perused by your Sons & Daughters or any of Yours & my friends and intimate acquaintances. I would hereby particularly convince my Nephew Richard that He has been too much prejudiced against Kentucky and that the advice which he has very frequently repeated to me (tho' given no doubt from the very purest motives) was immature,— I would induce him if it were possible to view these western regions in so advantageous a light as to become as much convinced of its excellency as I was

before we removed hither & look to it as a future refuge from th evils which I have experienced for a few years past to the Ea & from which I do not think he has been or now is entirel exempt— if matters should not go prosperously with him a Curles, with the utmost confidence I assert that with his gre activity & skill in husbandry brought into action—two or thr thousand pounds and the Negroes which he at present possesse would enable him to live as well here (if not better) than he ca upon that fine estate, Curles, & he would here be more in th way of procuring lands for his Children. David[43] has never ap peared to be insensible to the attraction of this Country, but th lucrative & improving office which he holds in Virginia must fi him permanently there— however I would advise him to pu chase Military lands for the benefit of his Sons—as the pla he holds is at best but an annuity & I know very well that he not of a temper to bank any part of the profits— Of all yo Children Brett, Ryland, & D. Meade are those to whom I am th most desirous of communicating just information, and altho' th foregoing pages are not fully adequate to that end yet I persua myself that they have confidence in my veracity, & that the fac which I have advanced (if not contradicted by the evidence of an other person of equal credit who may have had better means information that myself) may be established with them. I do n wish to persuade them, or either of them, to come out here wi their wives & Children before they have been here themselves judge for themselves, but do earnestly advise that one or more them would come out this fall or next spring. if they come th fall my Son David will accompany them in & if next Spring I will be in Virginia the ensuing Winter & will accompany the out. Your Daughters (my dear Nieces) can receive little instru tion from a perusal of this letter & I shall owe it altogether their partiality to me if they should derive any amusement fro it. it can have little merit but with those who love me, & it is little consolation and comfort to me (removed at so great a d tance from those objects [of] my truely parental care & affectio to believe as I do that the sincere & tender affection which I ha for them is not improperly placed, & that I receive a due retu for it in kind. I have received two letters from Mr. Lewis Bu well of Richmond the last of them dated ye 3 of August; in that acquaints me that you and your Daughters were well just befo which was to us the most engageing [sic] feature in the let which however was otherwise very acceptable. Ryland desired

[43] Meade's nephew, David Meade Randolph.

to write to him— the length of this & matter it contains [illeg. passage] any information which this does not convey & I do hereby express with the same earnestness the love I have for him, that could be done if this was addressed to him. Sally & Polly whose fortunes are so entirely attached to yours have a claim upon my heart above all others except my own Children— my tenderness for them always bears a due proportion to that which I have for you my ever very dear Sister— it is most pleasing to write to you. it beguiles the imagination & I seem to be conversing with you personally. my paper admonishes me to say farewell for a time.

D. Meade